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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Chesterfield's LEPC proves its worth

The emergency manager's dream team is an alliance of state and local officials, law enforcement, firefighters, EMS, public health, environmental agencies, hospitals, transportation, the media, private industry and local community groups. This unbeatable partnership exists in every locality in the state in the form of Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs.)

In 1986, SARA Title III guidelines mandated the existence of LEPCs and delineated the groups and agencies to be represented on them. Although structured to assist public safety officials with emergency chemical response planning, LEPCs have evolved into invaluable, multifaceted resources for many local emergency managers.

"Each functional area represented on the committee is a necessary part of emergency management planning," said Chesterfield Deputy Coordinator Lynda Furr. As Furr explained, Chesterfield makes full use of its LEPC for all-hazards planning.

Members are divided into three subcommittees: Training, Emergency Operations Plan and Public Information. Training assists with hazmat drills and FEMA exercises, Emergency Operations Plan

reviews and updates the county's EOP and Public Information develops community awareness programs. Over the years, this last committee has designed public service announcements on chemical emergencies, industry accidents, home chemical and fire safety and severe weather preparedness.

The LEPC has helped Furr plan and execute exercises. The committee has reviewed current plans and has put out brochures and other public information. In addition, it works with local industry to conduct hazmat drills for public and private sector workers.

The committee helped develop and support a multijurisdictional hazmat drill between Henrico, Richmond, Chesterfield and the Defense Supply Center.

The Chesterfield LEPC has written an emergency operations planning guide geared to small businesses in the area and, with funding provided by local industry, purchased needed computer equipment, software and hazmat supplies.

In addition, LEPC members are volunteers with extensive knowledge in their areas of expertise. For very little money, Furr observed, local government has access to a highly skilled pool of talent.

"Our LEPC has set its own

goals, developed a letterhead and logo and established its own identity," Furr pointed out. "It doesn't receive a lot of financial assistance, but one factor in the committee's success is the tremendous amount of support provided by fire services, the county administrators and the county board of supervisors. The LEPC supports our local government, but if our local government did not support it, the committee's efforts would be doomed to failure."

VDES Chemical Emergency Preparedness Branch Manager, George Roarty, observed, "The LEPC is a very well-organized and effective tool to aid in the planning process, not only with regard to SARA Title III, but also for a locality's EOP. To effectively respond during a disaster, a locality must have good plans and procedures in place for all the functional areas such as public information, fire, law enforcement, etc. Because all of these functional areas are represented on the LEPC, it makes sense to use the committee for all-hazards planning."

Furr concluded, "I don't know how I'd function without them. They are an extremely integral part of my emergency management team. They are very valuable and I call on them all the time for assistance."

Additional resources

An LEPC Outreach Kit containing a guide to conducting a community outreach/education program and camera-ready artwork for letterheads, posters, T-shirts and other kinds of promotional materials, is available through Mel Anderson Communications, a Houston-based public relations firm. The company developed the kit with assistance from a community Education Task Force representing 10 LEPCs in the Houston/Galveston Bay area. The cost of the kit is \$475. For more information, call 713/981-4390.

The CAMEO software is another resource available to LEPCs. This multi-task software will be distributed free to interested committees by the EPA in the near future. VDES is in the process of developing regional training workshops that will demonstrate how to use this software. For information, call George Roarty at 804/674-2708.

A career dedicated to public service

Emergency manager devotes 34 years to local government

He started with a dream. In 1972 he became the first paid fire chief in York County, overseeing a handful of career firefighters and volunteers. With the raw material at hand, he forged a professional fire and rescue organization that now employs over 100 people and provides invaluable services and protection to its citizens. He didn't stop there, though.

For the next 15 years, he dedicated himself, as emergency services coordinator, to developing viable emergency response capabilities for his county from the remnants of the cold war civil defense system.

This past July, after 34 years in public service, York County Director of Public Safety and Emergency Services Coordinator Wallace Robertson retired. Over the years, Robertson has witnessed the growing importance of the emergency manager's role in local government and has worked to integrate emergency management as a viable function.

"The challenge was to develop a good emergency operations system that would receive positive input from our board of supervisors and our citizens," Robertson said. "We achieved this goal within our county government and ensured that we provided enhanced training to our employees as part of our efforts."

Robertson believes not only in team building but in the importance of involving all of a locality's government in emergency preparedness training. "You definitely must educate and prepare your local administration and other county and city departments and agencies such as law enforcement. Each department has a very important role in emergency services. During day-to-day operations, they sometimes forget the other hat they wear during emergencies, so it's important to provide training and continue to exercise that training."

"Because of his professionalism, Chief Robertson has a lot of credibility with county government," said Deputy Coordinator Judi Riutort. "They supported him in his endeavor to establish an outstanding emergency services system for county residents."

Robertson has seen the emergency management field evolve at all levels of government and receive growing recognition by the public. "The field is much more professional now because the public is more aware that emergencies can, do and certainly will occur. Citizens realize they can be caught in the middle of a disaster or emergency and that they must be prepared to protect their families and property," Robertson observed.

"A very positive development is

FEMA's increased involvement with state and local government. The agency has more clearly identified the importance of developing and exercising good emergency operations plans. The strong partnership FEMA has forged with VDES and the Hampton Roads Emergency Management Committee has, in my opinion, improved delivery of emergency services in this region."

York County's Fire and Rescue Services has been recognized repeatedly for its excellent programs. Under Robertson's leadership, it has received the Peninsula EMS Council's Award for Outstanding EMS Agency, the National Association of Counties Achievement Award, the Governor's Award for EMS Excellence in 1992 and other state and national awards in emergency and fire services.

Robertson offered this advice to his fellow emergency managers. "Foster good, open communications. Coordinate your efforts, not only in your own locality, but with adjoining localities as well.

"Your co-workers and staff are your most important asset," he continued. "I will treasure most the friendships developed, challenges faced, and the many dreams and successful accomplishments of our organization."

Book offers tips on evacuation planning for transients

The unpredictability of human behavior is one of the many reasons why designing sound evacuation plans is a challenging and frustrating process.

Sociologist Tom Draebek has made it his business to apply scientific methodology to the study of human behavior. Two years ago, he published *Disaster Evacuation and the Tourist Industry*. The work examined disaster planning (or the lack of it) among hotel and motel owners and other businesses that depend on tourism.

His newest monograph, *Disaster Evacuation Behavior: Tourists and Other*

Transients, explores how people respond when they are away from home and are impacted by a disaster. Not only does he look at tourists; he also examines the behavior of business travelers, migrant workers, homeless people and other transient individuals.

In interviews with over 800 people who have lived through an earthquake or hurricane, Draebek's findings demonstrated that plans to evacuate this segment of the population were spotty, at best. His

discoveries emphasize the importance of public/private partnerships in community disaster planning to help reduce vulnerability to future events.

He concludes by presenting an "Action Agenda" for emergency managers and tourist industry people.

To order this \$20 publication, call 303/492-6819 and ask for

Monograph #58, or e-mail jclark@spot.colorado.edu.



HAZ MAT



Hazmat issues: 1996

What are the issues that are most important to those who work in the field of hazardous materials in Virginia? The VDES Technological Hazards Division has compiled the results of a survey conducted during April's Hazmat Summit. The findings are presented in a report structured to be a "working document," with space provided for written feedback.

The issues are:

☐ *Clarification of responsibility and authority.* Because of the many public and private sector agencies involved in hazmat response, responsibility and authority under the many laws and regulations need further clarification.

☐ *Training.* There is an immediate need to provide affordable, quality training for a wide audience which still meets complex regulatory and task-specific requirements.

☐ *Increased communications.* Because of the sheer amount of information available and the myriad agencies and organizations involved in the hazmat arena, a more effective way to access this diverse information would benefit everyone.

☐ *Terrorism.* The threat is immediate and real. Respondents felt the need for more information and training.

☐ *Cooperation.* Issues regarding hazmat response are intertwined and diverse. This overlap is seen in emergency and non-emergency situations as well as regulatory and

response requirements.

Respondents felt there was a need for greater cooperation between involved parties.

☐ *Equipment.* Technology offers diverse solutions as well as challenges. Evaluating hazmat needs and using technology to develop appropriate equipment needs to happen at a faster pace.

☐ *Household hazmat disposal.* The public must be better educated regarding the proper disposal of household hazardous materials. Offering reasonable options to our citizens presents additional challenges.

☐ *LEPCs.* LEPCs are mandated. The need exists to increase their effectiveness, particularly with regard to those that are inactive.

☐ *Environmental crimes.* These types of crimes are increasing and they present great dangers to public safety and to the environment. Response is expensive, as well. Respondents thought there was a need to develop control measures.

☐ *Enhanced relationships.* Partnerships must be developed between the public and private sectors and government organizations and agencies.

☐ *The news media.* People who work in the hazmat arena need to be trained to work with the media in an effective and positive manner. Conversely, the media needs to be sensitized to the issues faced by emergency responders so that
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relationships are improved on both sides.

☐ *Funding.* Dealing with hazmat materials is expensive, both in the private and public sector. Both groups face major economic issues in this arena.

☐ *Cleanup Contractors.* Use of this resource is increasing. Personnel in this type of business need to be better trained.

☐ *Regulatory requirements.* The cost is high with regard to

both the personnel and money needed in order to comply with existing regulations.

☐ *Liability.* Who's responsible? There appears to be many confusing answers to this question.

☐ *Public education.* We need more in the area of hazmat.

Become a part of the solution by sending in your feedback, suggestions and ideas. For a copy of this report, call 804/674-2406.

Administrators team up with emergency services

Through the numerous training exercises you've conducted, your local emergency services workers are familiar with the complexities of disaster response. Often their mettle has been tested during a real event, when what they've learned must be applied under stressful and challenging circumstances.

What about the recovery phase, though? Your people know their roles — are your local government administrators familiar with what may be required of them to keep city or county services up and running? Human resources, information services, planning, housing and human services, municipal services, the city manager's office — these are some of the groups you might not have considered involving in your disaster exercises.

In an article in the May issue of the *Natural Hazards Observer*, Emergency Management Director for the city of Olathe, Kansas, Mike Penner, described how his people took a different approach in their disaster exercise planning. They designed a disaster recovery phase simulation to involve local government administrators who would normally not participate. Penner pointed out that a disaster recovery exercise must:

- Educate top administrators about problems that must be dealt with, such as ensuring that financial outlays are documented so that reimbursement is received from the state or federal government;
- Expose them to all the possible situations that may arise during recovery, such as the need to assist local government employees who may be working extended shifts while their families are homeless because of a disaster;
- Demonstrate to administrators the importance of developing departmental emergency procedures;
- Build support for and encourage participation in a formal disaster management program and in emergency operations planning.

To find out more about the exercise, e-mail Mike Penner at dmfd87a@prodigy.com or call 913/829-3747.

TRAINING



VOPEX '96

August 13-15
North Anna Power Station

Mass Fatalities Incident Management

August 27-29
Newport News

Public Policy in Emergency Management

September 16
Prince William County

Coordinator's Briefing

September 17-18
Nokesville

For information, call VDES Field Services at 804/674-2458.

Technological Hazards Division

Hazardous Materials Incident Management

September 23-25
Virginia Beach

For information, call VDES Tech Haz at 804/674-2510.

Conferences and Workshops

VEMA Summer Session

August 22-23
Roanoke
For information, call Carol Wright at 540/981-2426.

CAMEO Training Workshop

September 10-12
Richmond
For information, call George Roarty at 804/674-2708.

Earn a long-distance degree

Emergency management is a profession that requires extensive technical knowledge as well as advanced planning and management skills. Now the opportunity to enhance these skills exists. Beginning this fall, the Rochester Institute of Technology is offering a bachelor's concentration in emergency management, within the applied arts and science program in its College of Continuing Education.

To create the emergency management concentration, students can add five "cap courses" to fire service, civil engineering technology or other related fields of study. These courses are "Earth Sciences for the Emergency Manager," "Man-made Hazards," "Emergency Preparedness Laws and Regulations," "Emergency Planning and Methodology" and "Emergency Operations."

The best part is that the degree can be completed entirely through distance learning. All you need is a VCR and a modem to catch the online classes. The course packet tells you how to get your books, set up your computer account and other information. The cost is \$221 per credit hour and financial aid is available for both full and part-time students.

For information on the degree and on financial aid programs, call 1-800-225-5748 or write: Environmental Management/CCE, RIT, 31 Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester, N.Y., 14623.



Managing Terrorism Events: The Oklahoma Experience

August 15 7-10 p.m.
Airing live from Oklahoma City, this program will feature an overview of the initial response after the bombing.

Training Civilians for Disaster Response

October 10 2-4:30 p.m.
This broadcast will discuss the effectiveness of citizen disaster response training programs and the ways in which trained citizens can enhance professional response capabilities.

For information, call 1-800/527-4893, 301/447-1068 or e-mail sdownin@fema.gov

Redesigned VDES home page hits the 'Net

The updated VDES home page is online and proving to be quite popular. During the threat posed by Hurricane Bertha, it received 1,270 visits in a seven-day period.

The home page features lots of different information, including a new URL

address. Be sure to bookmark the site at: <http://www.state.va.us/~des/des.htm>

Check out the "Emergency Management Information Center" at the bottom of the page. This links you to the online version of the *Update* newsletter as well as a variety

of other pertinent information for emergency managers.

To view *Update*, you'll need to download Adobe Acrobat Reader. Links to that software are provided on the page.

Take a look and let us know what you think.



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